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Hegel's Political Philosophy

Thom Brooks

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Introduction

G. W. F. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is widely considered to be one of the most important contributions to the history of political philosophy, but also among the more complex.¹ This chapter explains the central ideas to this ground-breaking work in an accessible approach that keeps technical terminology to a minimum. My aim is to clarify the distinctiveness of Hegel's project and illuminate its widely influential discussions about freedom, recognition, the individual's relation to the state and punishment to provide readers with a clear understanding of the *Philosophy of Right* within Hegel's philosophical system through a close reading of this text.²

Political Philosophy as *Philosophy*

Most key texts in the history of political thought can be appreciated as stand-alone contributions. John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* with its promotion of natural rights can be understood independently of Locke's other texts. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is very different and made clear from its Preface: 'This textbook is a more extensive, and in particular a more systematic, exposition of the same basic concepts which...are already contained in a previous work designed to accompany my lectures, namely, my *Encyclopaedia*

¹ All references in the text will be to Hegel (1991a). I will provide the section (§) number and where appropriate note Remarks (R) and Additions (A) where §112R refers to the Remark of section 112 and §112A refers to that section's Addition. Hegel's original text had neither Remarks nor Additions. The Remarks were added in a later edition of the *Philosophy of Right* by Hegel. The Additions are comments attributed to Hegel in his lectures by one of two students.

² Readers interested to pursue further reading are recommended to consider Brooks (2013), Houlgate (2005), Knowles (2002) and Wood (1990).

of the *Philosophical Sciences*' (Hegel 1991a: 9). On Hegel's self-understanding of his project, we must interpret his political philosophy within his philosophical system – and this is presented in the *Encyclopaedia* in an outline form. Hegel regularly elaborated other parts of his philosophical system in university lectures, including work on art, history, religion and the history of philosophy. Hegel reminds us on each occasion that his examination of a particular topic is not to be understood independently of the wider philosophical system of which each forms a part. For Hegel, political philosophy is not an isolated subject-matter, but a part of philosophy writ large (Westphal 1993).

This *systematic* nature of his philosophical contributions is difficult to appreciate by contemporary standards. Few, if any, philosophers today create and defend philosophical systems that attempt to unify logic, nature, ethics and other topics within the kind of systematic structure that Hegel provides. Furthermore, it can be more difficult to grasp the subtleties of a philosopher where to properly interpret any one part requires a knowledge of how it fits within a larger whole.

The systematic nature of Hegel's philosophy matters because it underpins how we should attempt to reconstruct it. Unlike most other philosophers, the text does not start from its own beginning, but it instead takes off from a point within a larger, systematic whole. We next turn in the following section to this somewhat unique approach to doing philosophy and are reminded of where we find ourselves in the dialectic at each point. While this requires careful study to best grasp each step in Hegel's argument, it is crucial to understanding how his project unfolds and its distinctive contributions to political philosophy. We must always recall that, for Hegel, thinking about political philosophy concerns our doing *philosophy* and so how it fits within a philosophical structure is crucial.³

³ The reader finds constant references by Hegel to his political philosophy as part of a 'science' and working within a 'scientific method' that is 'presupposed' from earlier work, such as his *Science of Logic*. These comments refer to the science and scientific method of Hegel's distinctive philosophical project and its foundation on a particular view of logic, not a reliance on any branch of the natural sciences.

One final, important note is that Hegel's way of doing philosophy involves a kind of rational reconstruction of the world. Perhaps the most famous passage of the *Philosophy of Right* helps illustrate this well: 'What is rational is actual; what is actual is rational' (1991a: 20). This passage has been misunderstood widely despite Hegel's efforts to clarify such mistakes (1991b: §6R). Hegel is not claiming that what exists is rational. He is instead referring to the idea that reason can help us discern the *actuality* in our *reality*. For example, our world consists of many political states and each might be said to 'exist', but each are only 'actual' in Hegel's understanding to the degree they satisfy certain rational commitments. We look to our world to discern its inner rationality where some practices and institutions will be found more 'rational' (and so more 'actual') than others. Two states may exist, but one can be more 'actual' than the other on account of its rationality. Hegel's meaning of rationality and how this might work will play an important role in the explanation of his political philosophy. This is made clear from the first sentence of the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*: 'The subject-matter of the philosophical science of right is the Idea of right – the concept of right and its actualization' (§1). Our central focus is on our understanding of 'right' and its actualization within Hegel's philosophical (and to his mind 'scientific') system.

Freedom

Hegel's political philosophy is first and foremost about *freedom*. His *Philosophy of Right* is a translation of the word *Recht* for 'right'. *Recht* is open to multiple meanings in German which Hegel exploits in his usage. *Recht* can mean 'right' in terms of 'it is *right* that all citizens can vote in the election' signifying a moral property: the moral goodness of democratic participation by citizens. Or it can mean 'right' as 'it is a *right* that all citizens can vote in the election' highlighting a legal property: the legal entitlement of citizens to democratic decision-making. Hegel's discussion of 'right' can then be understood as both a moral right

and a legal right where the latter may help ‘actualize’ the former. This is broadly consistent within a natural law framework whereby law and morality are seen as connected (Brooks 2012a). Hegel’s discussion expands on his earlier comments provided in his philosophical system published in his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* – which offers an encyclopaedic coverage of this system – where Hegel originally presented these ideas about freedom, the free will and right in outline.⁴

Right is understood as ‘the realm of actualized freedom’ where our freedom is transformed from merely thinking into something that becomes manifest (§4, 4R). Hegel attempts to overcome the particular challenge of determining what he calls ‘the free will which wills the free will’ (§27). The issue is this: if each person possesses a free will, then every individual is capable of being free. But how can we know when a free being acts freely and not merely arbitrary? We might contrast human freedom with non-human animals. My cat and I make various choices throughout the day. Hegel’s point is that my cat makes choices, but lacks substantive freedom because it acts in relation to its immediate cravings for food and sleep. Human beings alone can enjoy freedom in a more substantive sense because we do not merely exercise choice, but possess some mastery over the choices we make. It is not so much that I have a choice, but what I choose that is an issue.⁵ The problem then is to discern cases of mere arbitrary cravings from exercises of freedom.

Hegel argues that freedom springs from the activity of mutual recognition between persons. If human beings possess free will, they are capable of freedom. The first point to consider is that no one person can be his or her own judge about whether a choice is made

⁴ Readers are directed to consider the sections on the free will (Hegel 1971: §§481—82) where Hegel first raises the problem of how to know when free human beings makes choices and not arbitrary and which *leads* him to discover (in ‘Objective Spirit’ (Hegel 1971: §§483—551)) how freedom can and should be grounded by mutual recognition. Note that the need for mutual recognition discussed in the *Philosophy of Right* (which expands upon Hegel 1971: §§483—551) springs a problem arising in a section immediately before where the *Philosophy of Right* is placed. To understand where we should begin, we must consider where in the philosophical system we are.

⁵ This perspective is consistent with a ‘positive’ view of freedom where it is understood as a positive capacity to do or be in certain ways (Green 1993).

freely or not. This is because such judgements would be no less arbitrary. Hegel argues that if we take seriously the need to determine the boundaries of freedom then it is essential we find a more secure basis for making such judgements. He claims that the free will must be grounded in the will of another (§75), but what does this mean and how does it work?

Hegel illustrates this important idea about mutual recognition in his discussion of Property that immediately follows the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*. A regular mistake is to think that he is considering rights to property as such rather than as a mere illustration about how we can determine the contours of human freedom. This is despite his early caution that his discussion about property concerns how it ‘may constitute the sphere of its freedom’ and that ‘the rational aspect of property is to be found not in the satisfaction of needs but in the superseding of mere subjectivity of personality’ (§41, §41A). The rationality of property is not its satisfying our immediate cravings because then it looks like a mere animal want, but instead ‘superseding’ our ‘mere subjectivity’ – property is instrumental to discovering how we can improve a mere *subjective* judgement about freedom.

Property is important for Hegel because it can express some aspect of who we are through our choices. Our property is *ours* and constitutes some significance as such. Consider how the belongings we possess can express something about what we value within our available means. Hegel uses colourful language to express this idea – that we give our possessions ‘a soul other than that which it previously had; I give it my soul’ (§44A). But, again, this ‘soul’ I confer on my objects is my individual stamp whereby I demarcate things as ‘mine’ and part of my individuality (§59). The importance of my property for me is understood in terms of the values I assign them. So a thing’s *value* is a part of the exercise of my freedom and expression about how I choose to assign importance (§63). Nonetheless, the existence of a thing’s value is weak and limited to my own subjective tastes. We are unable to confirm whether such a choice is purely arbitrary or connected to my freedom.

Freedom is only possible through mutual recognition with another person. It is through someone else's *recognition* of a thing as *mine* that its existence becomes more 'actual' and determinate (§§71, 75). My judgements about objects as my property and the value I assign to them lose their purely subjective character when confirmed by another person. Mutual recognition makes possible objective judgement. Consider that my cat is *more* mine when not only I claim my cat as mine, but this is confirmed by others. Or that my car as mine is no longer a statement about personal taste or aspiration, but becomes more determine and more certain as others find agreement with me that my car is possessed by me. Hegel's point is not that we must always agree, but rather that agreement by persons through mutual recognition is a process by which free human beings interact with each other as free and through which our freedom can be understood and made more concrete. Note that wide agreement does not make something so as it can be based on error, but essential disagreement is a barrier to any concept of right becoming 'actual'. For Hegel, that which is most right may be actual in its rationality, but not actual as real and having its existence in the world – it remains an ideal or perhaps a mere dream. This connection between freedom and mutual recognition underpins the arguments that follow about how freedom in a just state should be conceived and upheld.

We have seen that the section about Property concerns our values, possession and rights, but it is focussed on the development of a conception about human freedom rather than any importance of property to satisfy our immediate needs. So Hegel's discussion about property addresses some common themes found in alternative theories of property while taking a generally unique perspective that provides a new understanding of property and its importance that can be easy to overlook.

Crime and Punishment

Hegel's discussion about punishment – which follows Property – works similarly. He will discuss ideas about wrongs and how they should be addressed using language reminiscent of what we might find in penal theory, but its perspective is distinctive and very different from other such work.

Hegel's analysis focusses on the concept of 'Wrong' [*das Unrecht*], the absence of right. Wrongs come in three categories. The first is the unintentional wrong. This is where we have 'collisions of rights' between contesting parties because of a disagreement based on a mistake (§84). If mutual recognition is required for the possibility of more objective judgements about freedom, then agreement can have real importance where relevant for helping us determine the contours of our freedom. This does not require we always agree or should endeavour towards agreement. But where we disagree because of some mistake, this is thought to be the least kind of wrong we do to others because all parties are engaged with each other on similar terms (§85).

Deception is the second category and a worse kind of wrong. This is because both parties appeal to a similar ground while one misleads the other. Deception is not a mistake about what should be right, but instead claiming a shared commitment that is insincere. Hegel argues that there should be no penalty attached to cases where people engage in unintentional wrongs, but not so for deceptions (§88A).

Crime is the third and final category of wrong and the worst of them all. We must pay careful attention to the fact that what Hegel is calling 'Crime' is distinct from the criminal law. Crime is not a mistaken judgement or a deception because these other categories make some appeal to the common right shared by all through mutual recognition. Mutual recognition based on a mistake is easily rectified and mutual recognition through deception is at least an engagement with others through mutual recognition. Crime is an essential breakdown of connections where the possibility of mutual recognition is denied others. Hegel

says that crime is a denial of right because it fails to engage in any mutual recognition with others (§95). So crime is not a mere disagreement, but rather a full disengagement. This is then a source for major problems: if we disengaged with others, then mutual recognition would not occur and so we would be unable to determine the development of our freedom – free institutions would become impossible and, indeed, the existence of our free individuality.

But what exactly is a ‘crime’? Hegel refers to the failure of individuals to honour contractual stipulations where one party refuses to satisfy the terms agreed between private individuals. This requires a ‘restoration of right’ whereby this refusal to accept what has been agreed is corrected so that mutual recognition is restored and with it the possibility of freedom and its actualization as ‘right’ (§99).

Crime is *not* the criminal law. Note that Hegel’s discussion considers only two persons interacting with each other and abstracted from their wider social and political context – this helps explain why Hegel’s discussion about ‘right’ concerning property, mutual recognition and wrong falls within a sphere he labels ‘Abstract Right’ to highlight its partial, non-contextual and abstract character. Abstract Right is a sphere of individual interaction of two persons. It is not a place with a legal system, police force, judiciary, a state or prisons. Much of Hegel’s discussion is purely theoretical although he makes clear that crimes in the *legal* perspective will build off the essential nature of crime as a failure of recognition that requires some form of restoration. So theft is understood as a failure of someone to recognize the property rights of others or murder is a failure to recognize the right of another to his life. The essential point is we must remember our place in the overall philosophical system – within this *systematic* reading and understanding of Hegel’s argument – and recall that Hegel may use some familiar terms like crime and punishment concerning wrongs, but he understands them differently from our usual uses here (Brooks 2001, Brooks 2004, Brooks 2012b, Brooks 2013: chapter 3).

Morality

Hegel believes that our reflections about mutual recognition lead us to move to a new sphere for consideration. ‘Abstract Right’ ends with the acknowledgement that there is a problem where persons refuse to honour terms agreed through mutual recognition given the central importance mutual recognition has for providing us with a process to make more determinate judgements about our freedom. The problem this discussion has is that we have not yet considered ‘the moral point of view’ of the individuals concerned (§105). In Abstract Right, it does not matter what specifically our principle or intention was – what mattered was that an intention is present, such as the intention to recognize one another as free persons (§106A). Hegel’s morality – or ‘the moral point of view’ – is an attempt to look within at our subjective morality to clarify the ways in which we can and should act as free and responsible human beings from which to build a more objective picture (§§107, 108).

Yet again – and we should no longer find this surprising – Hegel discusses a topic using familiar terms in unfamiliar ways. Moral philosophy is the stuff of ‘purpose and responsibility’ (§§115—18), ‘intention and welfare’ (§§119—28) and ‘the good and the conscience’ (§§129—41). Hegel notes that to free persons should be only accountable for actions for which they have responsibility (§117). Free persons should accept responsibility for consequences flowing from their choices (or omissions) as expressions of their intentions (§118). This discussion brings out what Hegel calls ‘the right of subjective freedom’ understood as a right to express one’s inner will through their actions, such as a choice of occupation (§§124, 124R). We can only be free through our intentions and actions that are freely chosen. One more basic way this could be achieved is through our possession and uses of property seen in Abstract Right. Another, more substantial and yet elusive way is through our intentions and purposes more generally.

Hegel's discussion about morality rests on an unusual view about what morality is about. This is brought out well in his famous critique of Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy. Hegel claims that Kantian ethics is little more than 'an empty formalism' that rests on 'an empty rhetoric of duty for duty's sake' (§135R). Much has been said about this passage and nearly all overlooks Hegel's central criticism. So commentators regularly focus on Hegel's concern that the Kantian categorical imperative that each person should 'act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law' determines morality through a formula without regard to its content (Kant 1997). Therefore, murder is immoral because we cannot all murder each other as once and so it is not an action we could perform at one time. One part of Hegel's concern is murder is wrong not because it is merely inconsistent with universal actions, but because it is *wrong*. Note that Hegel is critiquing Kant on Hegelian terms, such as the idea that wrong is rooted in a failure to engage in mutual recognition and denial of rights to others. Kant gets things incorrect because he understands wrongs in a different way.

A more general and central problem of Kantian ethics is that it is 'the merely moral point of view' (§135R). Its problem is that it is *moral philosophy*. Now this may seem like an odd problem, but again consider how Hegel uses familiar terms in unfamiliar ways. Moral philosophy for most philosophers today is about reflecting on normative considerations relating to the world. Few, if any, moral philosophers would agree that moral philosophy is utterly disconnected with the world as we find it.

But this is Hegel's distinctive view about what moral philosophy is about. Morality is an abstraction into oneself and considering our relations to others *in abstract*, non-contextual and beyond a connection with institutions. Moral philosophy is what we do thinking about ourselves while sitting in an armchair. Normative reflection about our relations to others *in context* is a different project altogether – what many might call *applied ethics* or *political*

philosophy, Hegel calls *Ethical Life*. Essentially, the problem of Kantian ethics is not merely that it is formulistic, but that it is a moral philosophy from which Kant develops a political philosophy.⁶

In other words, the reason why moral philosophy is limited and incapable of full application to the real world is because that's simply not how Hegel understands it. First we reflect on how we can locate a more secure basis for determining whether our actions are free or arbitrary. We think about ourselves in Abstract Right in abstract terms and removed from our social and political context. We consider our relations to others as one and another to discover the importance of mutual recognition and how it might work. We next consider ourselves as individuals in relation to others, but again in abstract terms without reflection about our concrete situations. The purpose of Morality is to clarify our self-understanding as purposeful and responsible persons. Hegel believes these steps are required prior to our starting an examination of ourselves in our concrete reality, as members of Family working in Civil Society within the political State. This third and final sphere of Family, Civil Society and the State is provided in what Hegel calls 'Ethical Life' and to which I will now turn.

The Family

Ethical Life is the sphere where we realize 'the Idea of freedom as a living good' (§142). It is a higher sphere of freedom because only here do we consider ourselves not in abstract, but in within our concrete reality. The first instance of this concrete reality, for Hegel, is the Family. The Family is conceived as a traditional union of a man and woman with children. The claim is that together they represent a higher, more developed scenario of mutual recognition where each recognizes each other as not merely persons but as members of a family with associated obligations to each other.

⁶ See also Brooks (2013: 82—95) and for discussion on this see Wood (2012: 20).

One way the family is a special kind of mutual recognition is its foundation in marriage. This is not a mere agreement about contractual stipulations over possessions, but a shared ‘union’ based on love where each identifies with one another through an act of free choice recognized by the other (§§161, 162). Unfortunately, it is essential that the family is composed of a man and woman at its heart. One reason for this is because Hegel saw men and women as possessing essential differences which complemented each other (§§166, 166A). A same-sex couple would fail to obtain the same goods that come from building on different strengths available to heterosexual couples.

A second reason is that Hegel views the family as a natural representation of logical development (§§168A). For Hegel, logic develops through the creativity unity arising from difference. It is then unsurprising, for Hegel, that persons with essential differences like men and women can conceive children (§173A).

Neither of these reasons are compelling although note that Hegel is arguing for a traditional view of the family on *non-traditional* grounds. The traditional family is ‘the ideal’ not because of any particular religious or cultural doctrine, but as a creative unity of difference giving life to the Hegelian dialectic and as a (literally) marrying up of complementary opposites. It is also well worth noting that Hegel did not himself enjoy a traditional family – and so he is not attempting to justify a particular conception of the family that he possessed.

A key element of Hegel’s perspective is that in the Family our understanding of mutual recognition is crystallized. Here we engage in mutual recognition within a specific context of our shared affection pursuing familial support through our essential determinations as husband, wife and child and where mutual recognition requires a system of mutual support focused on the upbringing of children.

Civil Society

Civil Society is a sphere of work and associational life beyond the family (and, unfortunately, the sole province of men). It is conceived as a further development of mutual recognition beyond the family unit. Whereas members of a family are united in a bond of *affection*, members of civil society are connected in a bond of *common purposes*.

Civil society comprises a world where individuals engage each other as individuals – not as members of their families, but as members of some trade or activity sharing the same employment or working in a civil service, like the police. Each is driven to work in civil society because of ‘subjective need’, the desire to provide for each person’s family (§189). Hegel accepts the idea of a market economy and says that through it a division of labour is created and this is welcome because it permits individuals to pursue their subjective freedom in a new way (§198). Likewise, each satisfies the wants of others through the pursuit of his work (§199).

Hegel argues for three different classes of workers, or what he calls ‘estates’. The first – the ‘substantial estate’ – are the farmers who depend on the cultivation of their soil for their livelihood (§203). The second is the ‘estate of trade and industry’ which includes mass production, craftsmen and finance (§204). Whereas the first estate finds itself dependent on its land, the second estate is dependent on itself – and so closer to ‘freedom’ than the first (§204A). The third estate is ‘the universal estate’ of the civil service (§205). Their livelihood is earned by the support of all as they work for everyone’s benefit: their ‘private interest is satisfied through working for the universal’ (§205).

Hegel’s discussion of civil society includes an illuminating discussion of law and society where he begins to revisit earlier topics, such as crime and punishment. He argues that the ‘objective actuality of right’ consists in its being ‘universally valid’ (§210). Our rights are deficient in their objective actuality where they fail to command the mutual

agreement of others. The legal system is one important effort to clarify and make more determinate a system of rights. Rather than private agreement about what we are each free or unfree to do, the law is an attempt to specify the appropriate conditions to guide our practices (§211). One result is Hegel endorses codification rather than a common law as a better means of specifying what these conditions whereas the common law leaves this more open. Hegel also recognizes that there may be an important normative space between what the law claims *as right* from what *is right* – a distinction highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. The law is an attempt to specify our shared and so more objective (and *less subjective*) view about right and it is a project requiring constant revision as we try to bring our ideals into actual existence.⁷

Nowhere is this give-and-take more apparent than our understanding of crime and punishment. Hegel now considers ‘crime’ in a more familiar sense as part of a criminal law. He recognizes that crimes are failures of mutual recognition, but what is understood to be such a failure is contextual and shifts over time. Witchcraft and wizardry were once serious crimes because of a perception about their intrinsic wrongness which is no longer widely shared and so removed from the criminal law. This perception about wrongness informs not only criminalization, but sentencing and it is influenced by the self-certainty of a community. Witchcraft and wizardry are no longer perceived to be the grave threats to society they once were and this, for Hegel, might be an explanation for why they no longer require punishment (§218). So what a crime is in its abstract character is relatively timeless, but those acts constituting crimes is given to change over time and so too the relation between crime and punishment can change (§218R).

⁷ This is another interesting example of this understanding of *less* subjective as *more* objective where objectivity is not all-or-nothing, but comes in degrees.

Hegel argues that we determine punishment's severity in relation to a crime's perceived 'danger to civil society' (§218R).⁸ The more the public is threatened by a crime, the more severe the punishment. One consequence is that perceptions and contexts matter: 'a penal code is therefore primarily a product of its time and of the current condition of civil society' (§218R). For example, if society was engaged in riots or war, then otherwise minor crimes take on a more threatening character and so can demand more serious punishment: 'in times of war...various things which are otherwise harmless must be regarded as harmful' (§234A). A result is that there is never one punishment alone forever 'just' for any one crime, but the relation will change as the contextual climate changes (§218A).

Hegel includes a famous discussion about the problem of poverty. This is the problem where a market economy will necessarily leave some below a level of subsistence (§244). It is often commented that Hegel has no good solution to this problem. For example, he recommends the unsatisfactory goal of encouraging colonisation (§248). What is philosophically interesting in his account is that the root of the problem of poverty is not that persons might lack sufficient wealth, but rather that they lack self-respect and a sense that they have a stake in society.⁹ Poverty and this sense of political alienation can often go hand-in-hand although need not and may also encompass the very wealthy. Hegel's point is that those without sufficient means (or those with great riches) may fall into the danger of viewing society as *an other* – a place where other people make rules and determine outcomes that appear imposed on me where my views, my projects, my *individuality* is not accounted for. Perhaps there is no ready solution to this. But it highlights one instance where Hegel's illuminating perspectives can both reveal some positive insights into our relation to others, but also fundamental problems concerning the fundamental importance of mutual recognition. A society where persons felt others will not and even cannot recognize them as

⁸ See Brooks (2012c) for an examination of a 'unified theory' based on Hegel's analysis that is redesigned to better engage with contemporary work in the philosophy of punishment.

⁹ On stakeholding and the idea of a stakeholder society, see Brooks (2012c).

citizens denies justice to all its members. For Hegel, this is an injustice, but perhaps inevitable and even in an ideal conception of the state.

The State

Hegel concludes the *Philosophy of Right* with a discussion of the state and its relation to others in international affairs. Membership in the state is our ‘highest duty’, in part, because it helps make so much possible (§258). Our family is a sphere of natural love and civil society is like a family away from home, but the state is different kind of ethical unity where citizens have the love of country expressed as patriotism (§268). The state and its constitutional structure ‘is the actuality of concrete freedom’ where our earliest, abstract ideas about freedom are developed and presented in their most concrete lights (§260).

Hegel’s state is controversial. He claims the estates composed of agrarian farmers and trade workers provide a check on the powers of the monarch and constitute a form of representation. For Hegel, representation based on geographical location is purely arbitrary. Instead, each person should be represented through his work in civil society – and since only men engage in work in civil society only men are represented in this way in Hegel’s state. Selecting representatives from within our spheres of work allows representation to blossom from our subjective freedom expressed through our choice of livelihoods. Plus, it permits the state as a decision-making body to benefit from a wide-array of interests and expertise (§273).

The state is headed by a constitutional monarchy (§273R, Brooks 2007). Hegel’s reasons for this is that the state requires someone to provide unity. For example, who is to say when ‘the state’ confirms a law as its law? This, for Hegel, is answered by ‘the king’ who signs bills into law. The monarch is hereditary because this permits him to provide the unity required. If he were elected, then he would represent the interests of his supporters and

perhaps not be seen as a source of unity by those who voted for someone else. So it is essential the monarchy is hereditary and unelected. The monarch works with the universal estate of bureaucrats and selects suitably qualified persons to serve in cabinet roles and advice the king on legislation and international treaties.

One interesting aspect of Hegel's discussion of the state is what he attempts to achieve. He argues that traditionally philosophers have debated preferences for aristocracy, monarchy and democracy. Hegel's approach is fascinating because he regularly tries to bring opposing views together in new and interesting ways. He argues that his model of the state has a natural aristocracy that inherits its position (the agrarian estate), a democratic element (the estate of trade workers who elect representatives) and monarchy (the constitutional monarch). So we need not choose which is best, but the three fit together best in a particular way.

Conclusion

Hegel's political philosophy is highly influential and unique. He develops a political philosophy from within a larger, distinctive philosophical system that understands familiar political concepts in unfamiliar ways. This brief chapter cannot do full justice to the full range of ideas and arguments presented and defended in his major contribution to this field, the *Philosophy of Right*. However, I hope that the reader will now gain sufficient insight into the problems that Hegel was attempting to solve and how his political philosophy develops as a view about how our freedom could become more concrete and actual. While Hegel's political thought is highly complex, it rewards in equal measure to its study.

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